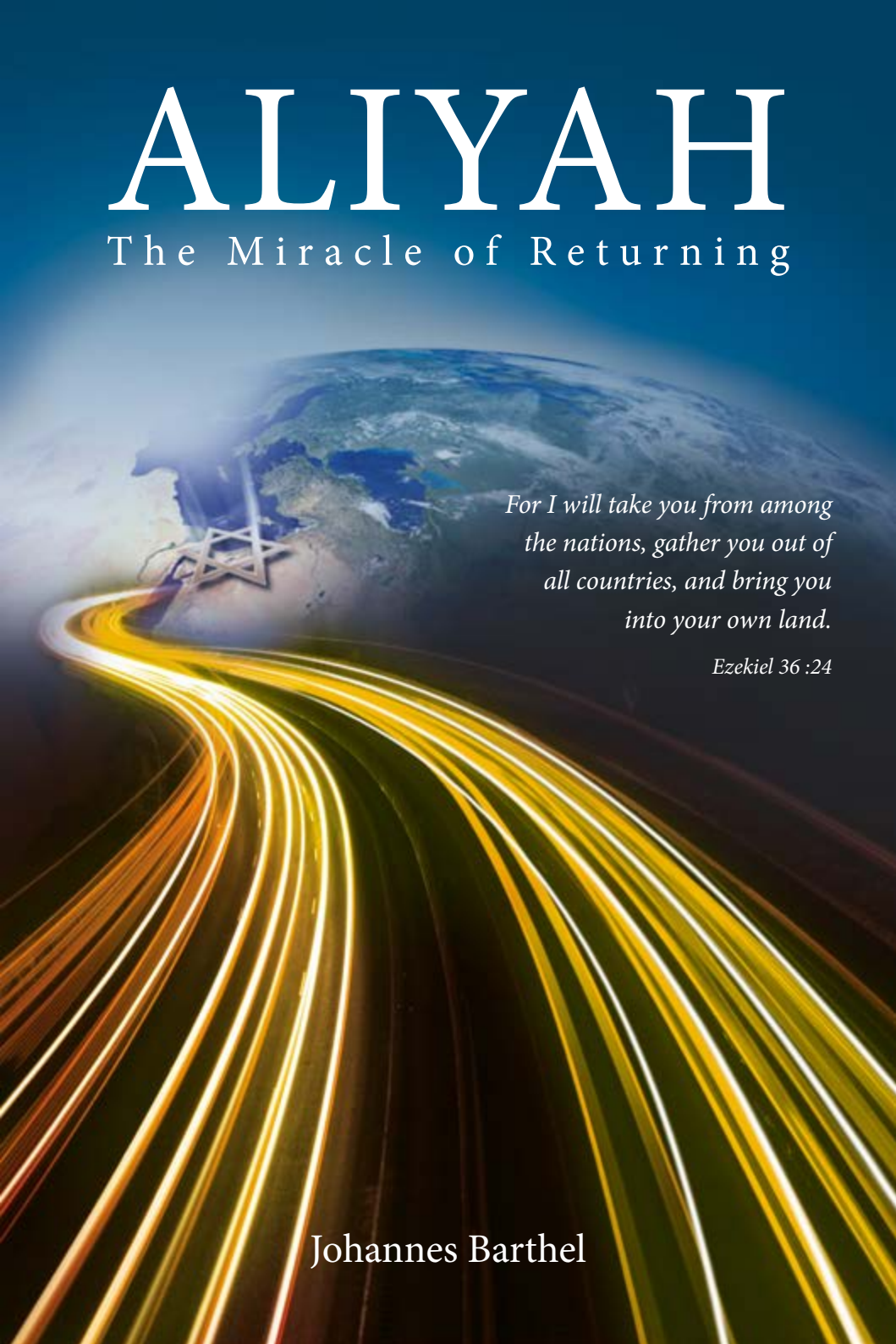
ALIYAH

The Miracle of Returning



For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.

Ezekiel 36 :24

Johannes Barthel

NKJV
Additions in brackets are from the author.

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This book must not be sold. Any donations received for this book will help Ebenezer Operation Exodus to support the return of the people of Israel to their country.

Contact information can be found in the appendix.

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Translator's Note.
The author initially wrote this booklet for Germany. Wherever he refers to the prevailing situation in the German Church or German society a footnote has been added that relates to similar situations in the UK. Likewise, a footnote for other English-speaking countries will be found in later editions.

If after reading this booklet you would like to invite a speaker from Ebenezer, please contact the Ebenezer office in Bournemouth, the address can be found at the end of this booklet.

Glossary

Aliyah
is the word for the immigration of Jewish people from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel. The word in Hebrew means ascent and is defined as 'going up' – progressing towards Jerusalem.

Olim
means Jewish immigrants to Israel – those making aliyah. In the singular, a male immigrant is called an 'oleh' and a female immigrant an 'olah'. Potential olim are those our teams contact and encourage to make aliyah.

Diaspora
In this book *diaspora* refers to the scattering of the Jewish people from their homeland in Israel into the nations of the world.

The use of the word 'Jews' in this book
The term Jew originally referred to the descendants of the tribe of Judah. However, in Jewish communities today and worldwide, it is used to refer to all the twelve tribes of Israel and their descendants. The meaning of this word, its derivation and meaning, is not a subject of discussion in this book.

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to say thank you to Almighty God, our creator, who has revealed Himself in the Bible as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Great I AM. He is the judge of all mankind, but He is also their redeemer. The Bible was written by Jews, and a Jew named Jesus took my personal guilt on Himself and gave me hope and life.

I would also like to thank my fellow workers in Ebenezer Operation Exodus, who since 1991 have been instrumental in assisting over 180,000 Jewish people to return to their ancestral home in Israel.

A special thanks goes to my Jewish friends: whether rabbis, the staff of Keren Hayesod, the Jewish Agency or the many olim whose roots are now in Israel, including those with whom we are still in contact.

A big thank you goes to my dear wife, Silke, who has supported me in the writing process and also my daughter, Sally, who corrected the spelling of the German version as well as the typesetting.

Foreword

God has placed us in a time of history when biblical prophecies are being fulfilled in a most dramatic and wonderful way. What does this mean for us as believers who are living in the last days before the coming of the Kingdom reign of Jesus Christ? Are we among those who 'discern the times' (**Matthew 16:3**) and act accordingly?

In our Churches and Christian fellowships, we hear little or nothing about the meaning of the worldwide return of the Jewish people and their restoration, which is literally happening before our very eyes. Even now, we see the fig tree putting forth its leaves (**Matthew 24:32–33**); this is something we should take notice of as it heralds the coming of the LORD who even now stands at the door.

I am thankful to Johannes Barthel for this inspiring and instructive summary of the key foundational biblical texts of the miracle of the Jewish return. His many years of practical experience in assisting Jewish people to return home has equipped him to challenge us with these truths in an easy and understandable way.

In view of the rapid increase of antisemitism, the Aliyah is a wake-up call to the body of Christ to make a determined stand for Israel and to support them in the coming time of their need. In **Romans 11** and **15:27**, Paul clearly explains how we as Christians should serve Israel. As wild branches grafted into the olive tree, the body of Christ is inseparably connected to Israel.

This booklet challenges every neutral attitude towards Israel and those who embrace replacement theology and avoid blessing God's chosen people Israel, *inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me* (**Matthew 25:40**). This and nothing less will be the criteria of the judgement of the nations.

The Aliyah is God's call for us in these days and a sign of where the world is on God's clock. Now is the time to abandon our passivity and to connect with God's plan to bless Israel and the nations. The body of Christ is called to comfort the people of Israel and to actively participate in the return home of the Jewish people.

Markus Ernst, Switzerland

Introduction

I am frequently asked why I have given up my work as a pastor in a local fellowship to help Jewish people return home to Israel. This question reveals how little understanding there is among Christians regarding the regathering to the promised land of the Jewish people from all the nations. This is more surprising to me in the light of the hundreds of Bible verses that speak of the day when all of Israel will once again return to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Ezekiel 34:13
And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.

This is only one of more than 100 Bible prophecies, which clearly testify that one day God Himself will again regather His people.

This book is not intended as a theological treatise on the extremely interesting subject concerning the restoration of Israel, but an expression of a deep conviction that in our generation we are living in a holy moment of history that has not been experienced since the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem and Israel almost 2000 years ago. This book is a summary of my preaching and teaching over the past years.

Chapter 1

My first experience as a young Christian

Following a decision I made, during a Christian holiday at the age of fourteen, to follow Christ and become a Christian, I attended various youth groups where I learnt the basics of my faith and how to live as a believer in Christ. However, there was no teaching on God's plan for His people Israel. For me, at that time, the present State of Israel had no relation to the biblical people of Israel. The Christians that I knew then would travel to the Holy land to see where Jesus and His disciples lived, but they had hardly any contact with the resident Jewish population, nor any interest in befriending them.

I began to read books concerning the biblical meaning of Israel and I met Christians who prayed for the Jewish people and their land. They showed interest in the political decisions affecting Israel and were convinced that as a nation Israel would play an important role in future history.

In the 1980s, various guest speakers came to visit churches in Germany and showed films with interviews of Jews from Russia, in which the longing to return to the land of Israel could be clearly heard. In our prayer meetings we would pray that God would open the iron curtain of communism and that He would release the people of God from the North. We based our prayer on **Isaiah 45:2**: *I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.* And then suddenly, almost overnight, the chains of the Soviet Union were broken, and we knew that it was God who had brought about this miracle–millions of Jews were now able to go home.

Soon after, I sensed that I should pray regularly for Jerusalem and Israel, but not out of guilt as a consequence of the unspeakable events of the Holocaust, but in a way and manner according to the promises in the Word of God. At the same time there grew naturally within me a longing to visit the land of Israel.

In the autumn of 1990, during a personal prayer time, I heard God clearly speak to me that I should visit Israel soon. The next day–or shortly after–I'm not certain any more–I found a slip of paper in my letterbox with information and a telephone number of an upcoming prayer conference in Jerusalem in 1991.

I duly registered for the conference. I was able to go to Jerusalem as my studies would have finished by the time the conference began. During the first night of the conference, in which Christians from 120 countries were present, the Gulf War began, and Saddam Hussein fired missiles in the direction of Jerusalem. We were not allowed to leave the hotel and neither did we know how long the war would last. It was during these days that God spoke clearly to the participants, 'Help my people go home to Israel.' None of us knew what would develop as a consequence of the conference. But we were sure that when God speaks, we had better act.

The story, so far, can be found in the book 'Operation Exodus' by Gustav Scheller, in which there is more detail. However, the story needs constantly updating. It never entered our head at that time that we would be helping the Bnei Manasseh, a Jewish tribe from India, to return home to Israel; or that one day there would be Aliyah group flights from South Africa, England, Germany, Italy, and France.

For me personally, it is an absolute privilege to be able to help Jewish people to return home to Israel. The history of Christianity, especially German history, is marked by the worst kind of anti-semitism: a hatred for the Jews that eventually led to the Holocaust. It may be that through helping in the Aliyah, God is offering us, perhaps for the last time, the opportunity to bless the Jewish people. It is a miracle that Orthodox rabbis are not only working alongside us, but offering us their friendship and even opening up their homes to us.

Chapter 2

The Miracle of the Jewish Regathering

Since there are already many books on the subject of the regathering of Israel, which are extensive in their detail, my aim here is to give a more concise view.

There has never, in the history of mankind, been a history like that of Israel. Over 2,600 years ago the northern tribes of Israel were driven into exile, and later the tribe of Judah, including the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were taken captive to Babylon. From there, after 70 years, they returned to their own land as prophesied in **Jeremiah 25:11** only later to find themselves under Roman rule, during which time the Temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed. It seemed that the destiny of Israel as a nation was finally sealed. Following the period of the Romans there were very few Jewish people living in the land, so few that they could no longer be viewed as a united nation comprising the twelve tribes.

To imagine a Jewish nation was not only unthinkable for non-Jews, but also for many Jews themselves. In the second half of the nineteenth century men like Theodor Herzl arrived on the scene and, in the beginning, there was hardly any belief and little support for his idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Jewish people had come to terms with living in the nations where they had been scattered and their Jewish identity was no longer rooted in the land of Israel. Notwithstanding this, as a consequence of oppression and persecution, Jews started periodically returning to the land. Under severe circumstances, they made the desert and the wastelands fruitful; in many cases they were taken advantage of by large landowners who charged the new immigrants inflated prices.

In the 100 years following there were only small groups of Jewish people arriving in Palestine. In 1860 the population of Jewish residents was around 12,000. Then following the 1880s there were large groups of Jewish people making Aliyah. Settlements were

established and through the important work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda the ancient Hebrew language, which had previously been used only in the Synagogue service when reading from the Torah, was brought back from the dead and adapted to modern life. This was an incomparable event never before seen in history.

When, on the 14th May 1948, David Ben Gurion declared the founding of the State of Israel, there were more than 600,000 Jewish people living in the land. Biblical prophecy was being fulfilled before the eyes of the world.

In Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Centre, there is a Bible verse written in large letters from **Ezekiel 37:14** which reads: *I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.*

Out of the ashes of the concentration camps and the hopelessness of the Holocaust, the state of Israel was reborn. My German ancestors planned to destroy all Jewish people and actually murdered over 6 million of them. Notwithstanding, today there are over 6 million living in the land of their fathers. Only God can do this!

In the Bible there are many detailed prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel:

a. God Himself will bring His people home. *But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase* (**Jeremiah 23:3**). In this context we find a Scripture that shows how eager God is to accomplish this: **Jeremiah 32:41**, *Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.*

b. There are two types of Aliyah: There are those who have a strong Jewish identity and are driven by a deep longing to return to their ancestral home in Israel. For many Jewish people, although their ancestors lived for many hundreds of years in a particular culture, they still feel themselves to be strangers. The second group are those who, as a consequence of oppression and persecution, are driven from the nations to seek refuge in Israel. It is similar to the exodus where

their hardship in Egypt as slaves was so difficult to bear that they cried out to God for deliverance. These two groups are mentioned in **Jeremiah 16:16**, some who are enticed like a fish and those who are running from their hunters. In **Isaiah 60:8**, God uses a picture of doves and clouds: doves are guided by an inner impulse to fly home, and clouds are driven by the wind and the storms.

c. There are specific Scriptures that prophesy where some of the Jewish people will live following their return to Israel. For some years I lived with my family in Spain where I learnt about the Sephardic[1] Jews. In **Obadiah 20** we read that they would settle in the Negev desert. Today, there are many Spanish Jews who are the descendants of those who were driven out of Spain and who are now living in the South of Israel, and when I meet them I find that I can hold a conversation in Spanish.

d. The most important aspect of the restoration of Israel, amongst others, is the Scripture in **Ezekiel 36:22–28**: *Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God".*

[1] *As Sephardic (Hebrew* סְפָרַדִים Sfaradim*) we refer to the Jews and their descendants, who lived in the Iberian peninsula until their expulsion in 1492 and 1513. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews.*

In the final analysis it is something that will glorify God's name. When Israel is back in the land and reunited with their God, all the nations will know that there is only one God. That will be one powerful statement, and it should be sufficient motivation to be involved with assisting Jewish people to return to Israel.

Chapter 3

Motivation–our belief in the faithfulness of God's Word

If God were not to fulfil His promises to Israel, how do we know that He will keep His promises to us? It is to our great advantage that, unlike many people today, the characteristics of God are faithfulness and dependability. The Word of God is not a perhaps, or, a yes and no, but absolutely dependable. That means if God says He will do something, then He will do it. In this context we need to distinguish between conditional promises and unconditional promises. God will always fulfil His side of a promise, this truth is foundational to our faith.

2 Timothy 2:13
If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Numbers 23:19
God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

Jeremiah 33:20–21
Thus says the Lord: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.'

Jeremiah 33:25–26
Thus says the Lord: 'If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.'

The return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land was prophesied in the Bible by the prophets of Israel 2,500 years before it began. Without too much effort we can find over 100 Bible verses which are being fulfilled before our eyes, and some that are yet to be fulfilled. In many Bible verses we find that closely linked with the return to the Promised Land is a promise that Israel will be restored as a nation, and will also experience a spiritual awakening enabling them to return to the LORD their God and recognise who their Messiah is. A close study of the various biblical statements will lead to the conclusion that neither the spiritual awakening of Israel, nor their turning back to God, could occur without first their re-gathering from the nations. By the way, the return of the Jewish people is a sign to the nations of the world that God is faithful and true to His Word. When we reach the period of history that the Bible refers to as the 'End Times', we know that the nation of Israel in its entirety will be saved. Paul writes about this in **Romans 11**:

Romans 11:25–27, 29
For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." ... For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Ezekiel 37:12–14
Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it," says the Lord.'

Micah 7:15–20

"As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders." The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; They shall put their hand over their mouth; Their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; They shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, And shall fear because of You. Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.

Zephaniah 3:14–20

Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." "I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, Who are among you, To whom its reproach is a burden. Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, And gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame In every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will bring you back, Even at the time I gather you; For I will give you fame and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I return your captives before your eyes," Says the Lord.

When we look at Israel today, we can see a growing number of believing Jews who have a deep longing for the coming of their Messiah. In the run up to the Gaza war three young Israelis were kidnapped, and then thousands of young Israelis came together to pray. The more the pressure was increased during the ensuing terror and the threat of war, the more the inhabitants of Israel confidently began to assert that their help and protection was in their God.

Even if our motive is purely selfish, we should recognise that when everything is going well for the Jewish people the rest of the world is being blessed. Unfortunately, this fact is largely unknown by many Christians, therefore they are active in the movement to boycott Israeli products and many even deny the right of Israel to exist as a nation in the land of Israel. The Bible is clear that the Messiah will reign as King over His own people from Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 3:15–18
"And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the Lord, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers."

Zechariah 8:20–23
Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities; The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, And seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also. Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the Lord.' Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'

The presence of an ever-increasing number of Jews living in the land make these ancient prophecies visible for all to see. The fact that vineyards are once again grown in Israel (the planting of vine trees was forbidden under Islam by the Ottoman Empire), and that ancient towns long forgotten are once again flourishing, and the desert is blossoming as a rose, should remove from us any doubts that the Word of God is true.

Isaiah 35:1–2
The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, The excellency of our God.

Amos 9:14–15
I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," Says the LORD *your God.*

As Bible-believing Christians the principle that guides us should not be a political or a business model, or any other motive. We believe that through the regathering of Israel to their land, the fulfilment of God's Word regarding the Messiah and His future reign on the earth is soon coming to pass. Should some parts of the Word of God fail to materialise, then God would be unbelievable and untrustworthy. Why then would we dedicate our lives to Him if we cannot with certainty trust Him?

Chapter 4

Biblical Role Models

For Christians who are involved in supporting the Aliyah through prayer, practical, and financial means, there arises the question as to whether there are any biblical or historical role models we can learn from?

Concerning the present day return of Israel to the land, we speak frequently of the second exodus. On closer inspection there are parallels as well as considerable differences in comparison to the Exodus from Egypt. The principles that underpin the Aliyah are found repeatedly in the history of the Bible and the nations, and as such are there for us to learn from. There are biblical characters that we can learn from who were part of the exodus from Egypt and the possession of the land of Canaan, as well as the return from the Babylonian exile and the period of the judges.

First of all, we will look at role models from the ranks of Israel and then some examples from the gentile nations; that is from those non-Jewish people who had a revelation from God regarding His plan for Israel.

4.1 Role Models from within Israel

Moses

One of the best-known characters in the history of Israel is Moses himself. Who has not heard of the wonderful history of this man of God whom the Bible describes as the friend of God (**Exodus 33:11**)? Following his birth, this child of Hebrew parents grew up in the house of Pharaoh the oppressor of Israel. When he was 40 years old, he witnessed how some of his people were being mistreated and there awakened within him a strong desire to help them. Unfortunately, he attempted this in his own strength and his help was rejected by the Hebrews; he was forced to flee from Pharaoh and get away as far as he could. In the place where he settled, he married the daughter of a pagan priest and started a

family, which we will consider later. He lived in the desert with sheep for the next 40 years. Not until the cry of the people of God was so strong, and the time came for the deliverance of Israel from slavery, did he receive his calling from God.

Exodus 2:23–25
Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

God revealed Himself to Moses as the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Exodus 3:6**), and gave a very clear mission to him. After a brief discussion Moses accepted a task that would engage him for the next 40 years and become his life's greatest challenge. Moses was not only ready to face Pharaoh, but also to return to his own people who had chased him away 40 years previously.

We know the eventual outcome of the story, but there is one incident I would like to highlight. Moses did not always find it easy to lead the Israelites. On the one hand they wanted to escape from slavery with the promise of a land before them; on the other hand, they were still not free in their minds. Frequently, they rebelled against God and the leadership He had appointed. They were ready to return to Egypt rather than go to a land that they had only heard reports of. If Moses had not had such a deep relationship with God, it would have led to catastrophe in the desert. The psalmist put it like this:

Psalm 106:19–23
They made a calf in Horeb, And worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory Into the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt, Wondrous works in the land of Ham, Awesome things by the Red Sea. Therefore He said that He would destroy them, Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.

Here we discover an intercessor who chose not to seek his own advantage, denying his own personal needs for the sake of the well-being of Israel, as he honoured God by staying in the background. When we read the account that is found in the below scripture, we can see clearly that God made Moses an exceptional offer:

Exodus 32:9–10
And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

If he had chosen to do so, Moses could have saved himself 40 years of leading through the desert a people who constantly stood against him. In today's thinking most people aged 80 years old would prefer to enjoy their retirement avoiding any problems rather than do what Moses did. He pleaded with God to give the people another chance; this is truly the heart of an intercessor.

When we consider the history of Israel in the present time, I am impressed with the example of those who have left the comfort of their life in the West to take part in the rebuilding of the land of Israel.

Moses had learnt to trust in God, and he frequently sought protection in the presence of God. He knew the promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in relation to the land and he held fast to this promise even though he would only see the land from a distance as he was not allowed to enter it.

Joshua and Caleb

We can learn a lot about the principles of living a life of faith from these two men. A main leader from every tribe was chosen to spy out the land and report back to the people. They each brought back a report that confirmed the Word of God that the land was indeed pleasant and fruitful:

Numbers 13:25–27
And they returned from spying out the land after forty days. Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation

of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit."

However, having seen the inhabitants of the land and their fortified cities, ten of the spies were fearful and anxious, advising against Moses and God's will for them to possess the land because they gave way to unbelief **Numbers 13:28–33**. This led to a rebellion against Moses that only Joshua and Caleb stood against because they chose to trust in the Word of God.

Numbers 13:30
Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

Numbers 14:6–8
But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.'"

The unbelief of the other spies resonated with the fear of the people, and they would have stoned Moses, Joshua, and Caleb except for the intervention of God (**Numbers 14:10**). Interestingly, these were the only two who, 40 years later, were allowed to enter the land and had the privilege of dividing it among the children of Israel.

The history of Israel is the history of a people's need to walk in faith and trust in God. When today we think about the regathering of Israel to their land, we soon come to the limits of our understanding. On a daily basis, we see media reports on Israel and the millions who, with every means possible, attack the nation: whether it's a lone terrorist with a knife looking to kill a Jew, or a large country seeking to develop its nuclear ability with the sole purpose of completely destroying Israel. Besides this, Israel is under pressure

from governments all over the world to give up their land and this pressure is reinforced from anti-Israel movements such as the BDS campaign, and even statements from churches that deny Israel's right to their land.

I am often asked whether it is irresponsible of us to send Jews back to this much contested land. My answer is always the same, it would be irresponsible if we were not to do it. The people who criticise us are like the ten spies who spread unbelief amongst the people of God. How good it is to be able to know that when we consider the end, it is very different from the one that is feared by the critics:

Zechariah 8:1–8
Again the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.' Thus says the Lord: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the Lord of hosts, The Holy Mountain.' Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit In the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand Because of great age. The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.' Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?' Says the Lord of hosts. Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east And from the land of the west; I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.'"

Daniel, Nehemiah and Ezra

The present day return of the Jews to the land of Israel is not the first time the Jewish people have returned to their land after an exile. After the southern kingdom had been led into the Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, a large part of the Jews returned from there in various groups. This is what Jeremiah had foretold.

Jeremiah 25:11–12
And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the Lord; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

Jeremiah 29:10
For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.

In Daniel 9 we learn that following his reading of the prophetic word, Daniel was moved to pray in a profound way. He understood that what he had read was a specific word and that the time for its fulfilment was at hand. He did what today few Christians do, he tested biblical prophecy to understand its relevance and believed in its complete fulfilment.

Daniel 9:1–4
In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans– in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments!"

Ezra and Nehemiah were granted the privilege of helping to rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. They took the Word of God seriously and were concerned for the welfare of Zion, and consequently took measures to rebuild its walls. Not only were they both willing to rebuild the wall, but they also led the people back to the worship of their creator. The commandments and the feasts were re-established. The practice of intermarriage with heathen wives was condemned and the presence of God was sought.

Both Ezra and Nehemiah were intercessors and knew that it was only with God's help that they could complete the work. Their trust was in God and they had no selfish motives. Remember that Nehemiah had left an excellent position to go to a land that he was unfamiliar with in order to bring back to life the ruins of Jerusalem.

Ezra 7:9–10
On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra 8:21–23
Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.

Nehemiah 1:1–4
The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 2:3–5
and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste,

and its gates are burned with fire?" Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Both Daniel and Nehemiah enjoyed successful careers in their exile, having responsible positions and also enjoying a good relationship with the King. However, deep in their hearts they also had a love for Zion. They were not indifferent to the plight of their people. The Word of God was important to them, they were not simply religious, but they believed in its literal fulfilment.

In the return from the Babylonian captivity we discover an interesting point that should engage us today; Ezra and Nehemiah shared their thinking over the rebuilding of Jerusalem with non-Jewish people, in this context, the Kings who ruled the lands in which they lived. In Ezra we see that the initiative to help Zion's cause came from this gentile King.

That leads us to the next chapter. Not only Jews but also many Christians ask the question whether or not non-Jews qualify to help with the Jewish people's return to Israel. Perhaps we may find biblical examples?

4.2 Non-Jewish Examples

King Cyrus

Ezra 1:1–4
Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in

Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

The name of the King and the time period, including the specific proclamation, is foretold by Isaiah before it happened. We see here a further example of God's omniscience. Through his prophets He reveals events that are yet to happen. Since already many prophecies have been fulfilled, we can be certain that those yet to come to pass will be fulfilled exactly as it is written.

Isaiah 44:24–28
Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I am the Lord, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness; Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places; Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers'; Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

A few verses later we learn why God does this. As previously said, it is through the rebuilding of Israel that the name and honour of God will be glorified to all mankind and they will know that there is a living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Isaiah 45:4–6
For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other.

This goes against the theology of many Christians who ask how God can use those who do not love God, or as we would say today, worldly men. Here we see again the sovereignty of God. God is not limited by our ideas as to where salvation and help can come from.

Cyrus was not the only King whom God used in those times to enable the Jewish people to return home. In the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah we find reports of how God used the Kings Darius and Artaxerxes in the building of the Temple and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. Not only did they provide the authority to rebuild, but they generously gave large amounts of gold, silver, and other materials. In addition, they ensured that the Temple implements were returned. Ezra and Nehemiah had access to the treasures of these Kings. Why was this? These Kings understood that in blessing Israel they would be blessed. What a better world it would be today if our governments had this knowledge!

Ezra 1:7–11

King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This is the number of them: thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, twenty-nine knives, thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a similar kind, and one thousand other articles. All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar took with the captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ezra 7:21–24

And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently, up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred kors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribed limit. Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we inform you that it shall

not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or custom on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God.

By the way, these Bible verses and others are the foundational Scriptures that inspire us to help the olim to travel with their goods so that they do not come home to Israel empty handed.

One day coming, we will also see that the Word of God from Isaiah 60 concerning Israel will be completely fulfilled.

Isaiah 60:10–12
The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, And their kings shall minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, But in My favor I have had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; They shall not be shut day or night, That men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, And their kings in procession. For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, And those nations shall be utterly ruined.

Jethro

The father-in-law of Moses was in many ways an example to show us how we should act today. What do we learn from him? He was a Midianite priest and he lived with his family and his sheep in the desert. He was a descendant of Abraham, but not in the line of promise from Isaac and Jacob, but from the woman Abraham married later, called Keturah (**Genesis 25:1–4**; **1 Chronicles 1:32**). Whilst most of the Midianites were enemies of Israel, Jethro was a happy exception. Jethro received Moses as he was fleeing from Pharaoh and risked problems for himself as a consequence. Jethro gave one of his daughters–Zipporah–in marriage to Moses (**Exodus 17:21**), and he cared for him and his family. When Moses was called to go to Pharaoh, Jethro encouraged and supported him. In **Exodus 4:18**, we read that he explicitly blessed Moses in His assignment. In **Exodus 18:2**, we read that he cared for Zipporah the wife of Moses, and his two sons Gershom and Eliezer, when Moses sent them back with Jethro as he prepared to go to Egypt.

Many families today would be more than happy to have such caring parents and especially a father-in-law like Jethro. Jethro

could have criticised Moses for leaving his family for such a long time, but he realised that God Himself was behind the assignment given to Moses. From **Exodus 18**, there is more that we can learn:

- Verse **1** and **8**: He heard what God was doing for Israel, and he took time to understand the details.
- Verses **9–11**: He rejoiced with the people of Israel and this brought him nearer to God.
- Verse **12**: He celebrated with the Israelites and had fellowship with them.
- Verses **16–26**: His attitude of humility and of blessing Israel meant that not only Moses but the rest of the people trusted him, and this enabled him to continue providing advice and support.

If we would be friends with Israel, we should take notice of Jethro's example. This means we should stay firm in our support of Israel's right to the land without any kind of trade-off. Also, when we want to understand the calling of Israel in all its entirety, then we need to acknowledge that the living God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then it may be, if God allows, that we, or someone else, will be able to offer advice and support to our Jewish friends. But, as long as we are led by a know-it-all superior attitude, we should refrain from comments and tips on how Israel should behave, and also keep our distance.

Our desire is to offer practical support to Israel through the finances that God has given us (this is especially important in helping the Jewish people return to the promised land) and we will benefit from this attitude as our faith in God grows stronger.

Rahab

In Rahab we meet a woman who at a critical time made the right decision. A resident of Jericho, she had heard what God had done for Israel, and she decided to set her heart for Israel's God. This woman, although a prostitute, knew what the right course of action was, she hid the spies and she gave the following reason:

Joshua 2:9–11
[...] I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

We could say that Rahab converted to the God of Israel. Not only did this lead to her and her family being saved, but she even became part of the people of Israel. From the study of the genealogy of Jesus, we learn that she was the mother of Boaz who was the great-grandfather of David.

Joshua 6:25
And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

In the letters of the New Testament we find that her faith is mentioned twice.

Hebrews 11:31
By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

James 2:25
Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

Rahab reminds me of the many people who, following her example, were ready to hide Jews from the Nazis. Some of those who were willing to do this lost their lives as a consequence. Something they will not regret in eternity.

In recent years we have seen an enormous increase in antisemitism in Europe, including Germany. Once again, people are taking to the streets in order to boycott Israeli products. Even pastors are not ashamed to preach against Israel. It may look different to the years before 1934 in Nazi Germany, but whoever pursues this anti-Zionism, with its lies and anti-Zionist propaganda, is declaring that they do not believe in the Word of God and its certain promise of land to Israel; or that these promises are still valid today.

If we wish to be known as Christians, then we should follow the example of Rahab. Are we willing to take a stand for Israel against the majority opinion? This is particularly relevant to the Jewish return to the land of Israel:

Isaiah 2:1–3
The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Ruth

The example of Ruth is probably the best-known model overall for non-Jews in their assistance with the Aliyah. This young woman was ready to return to Israel with her Israeli mother-in-law even though she had no personal prospects in Israel.

What a strong role model Ruth is, even to the extent that a complete book of the Bible is dedicated to her. Similar to Jethro she came from a people who were enemies of Israel.

History teaches us that after Lot had separated from Abraham he chose an apparently pleasant place to live in, but their sexual perversion tormented his soul (**2 Peter 2:6–8**). In many places in today's world we may come to the same conclusion. Many areas of society are affected by increasing godlessness and people have no shame living out their perversions in broad daylight.

God eventually made an end to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, but made it possible for Lot and his family to escape. Sadly, we know what happened to Lot's wife and how the story ended: the two daughters of Lot had not learnt to trust in God and made their father drunk in order to have children by him. The Ammonites and the Moabites are directly descended from these two children (**Genesis 19**).

Later, as Israel was entering the land, the Moabites hired a sorcerer to curse the people of Israel. This made God very angry:

Deuteronomy 23:3–4
An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

Nevertheless, Ruth turned her back on the idolatry of her own people with their anti-Israel attitude. After her mother-in-law had suffered the death of her husband and her two sons, Ruth made the decision to leave her own people and to go to Bethlehem with Naomi; whereas Orpah, the other daughter-in-law, returned home to her own people.

Ruth 1:14–17
Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

When we study the narrative in detail, we can be certain that Naomi, the mother-in-law of Ruth, had a tendency towards despair. She

wanted to change her name to Mara, which means bitterness (**Ruth 1:20**), as she was overwhelmed from the pain of all that had happened to her. However, Ruth was an encouragement in her willingness to accompany her and was not daunted by her negativity.

We can see, therefore, that it was not Naomi who encouraged Ruth's faith in God, as she had encouraged Naomi to return to her own people as her sister-in-law had done (**Ruth 1:15**). Happily, Ruth made her own decision to follow the right way.

From the story of Ruth there are more things we can learn:

- Irrespective of which nation or culture we come from, love for God is a personal attitude.
- Friendship with Israel always comes with a personal cost. Selfish motives will not endure.
- The first emotion to draw near to Israel, as Orpah had, is not enough.
- Personal belief in the living God and His promises is the best and strongest motivation.

Chapter 5

The Second Exodus and Isaiah 49:22

Isaiah 49:22
Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders."

From the biblical examples we considered in the last chapter we have seen that those outside Israel have played a significant role in helping God's people in their exodus from Egypt, in their conquering of the Land God gave to them, and in their return home from Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah 49 speaks of a time that is coming which is after the Babylonian captivity. The language in verse 6 refers to the tribes of Jacob, not only those from Judah; but in verse 12 the reference is to a gathering from every direction under heaven. In verse 17 it says: *Your sons shall make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste shall go away from you.*

It is amazing how a land, which since Roman times has seen so much destruction and annihilation, has been brought back to life in just a few decades. Still today, Israel needs people with a pioneer spirit who are ready to rebuild the land. Every Christian ought to rejoice over the rebuilding of the state of Israel and should wish to contribute towards it, either by moral support, practical assistance or prayer.

When Isaiah prophesied that God would raise His banner to the nations, so that they could help the Jewish people return home, to whom was he speaking? It is unlikely to be the United Nations. Resolutions against Israel have constantly been drafted in recent years, while human rights violations that have obviously taken place in surrounding states have not even been mentioned. Many countries

who are part of the UN are against Israel. Here is an extract from the article *The UN's War on Israel*, from 31 March 2015 in the New York Times:

Knowing this history, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that, in the 2014-15 session alone, the General Assembly adopted about 20 resolutions critical of Israel, while the human rights situations in Iran, Syria and North Korea merited just one condemnation apiece. Day after day, member states turn a blind eye to the most deplorable crimes. Iran? Just one hostile resolution for a nation that, on average, executes citizens at a rate of two a day for "crimes" that include homosexuality, apostasy and the vague offense of being an "enemy of God". North Korea? Just one negative resolution even though it has imprisoned more than 200,000 citizens, throws children into forced labor camps and subjects its population to food shortages and famine as a result of government policies. Syria? Again, just one resolution for a government that has pursued a war against its own people that has caused the deaths of at least 220,000 men, women and children – many by torture, starvation, chemical weapons and barrel bombs dropped on markets and schools.

Also, in the development of the EU, we see a tendency again and again to take decisions against Israel. The Bible is very clear: we have no right to divide Jerusalem or the land of Israel. What are our politicians thinking, and who are they, that they feel they can give instruction to Israel? These are nations that are clearly antisemitic, deny the Holocaust, and quite often declare that their nation's goal is to destroy Israel. But we gladly make contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars with them, court their politicians and refrain from speaking against their human rights violations, whilst we are willing to force the already small state of Israel to give up even more land. What a paradox! And yet God also knew this long in advance and he will not allow it:

Joel 3:1–3
For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into

judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.

So, if **Isaiah 49:22** is obviously not addressed to the UN, or the EU, to whom is Isaiah speaking? Should it not be first and foremost those in the Gentile nations who believe in the God of Israel? This means Bible-believing Christians throughout the world, who are charged with helping the Jewish people return home to Israel. That this is at all possible, after the manifold examples in church history in which Christians have brought suffering and destruction to the Jews, is a miracle and the grace of God. At this point I would like to refer you to the booklet *"When The Cross Became A Sword"*[1] by Merrill Bolender. Not only were the Jews persecuted amongst the nations, but even in their own land they were executed in the most gruesome ways. I can understand any Jew who, when offered help by a Christian, will reject it as a result of their knowledge of history. Even more astonishing is that we can count thousands of examples from recent years in which Jewish people have not only accepted our help but have even asked for it.

We cannot undo the past and there is no point in dealing with the atrocities of the past for the hundredth time when we have the opportunity to do good instead. To occupy ourselves with the past only makes sense when we want to draw real conclusions from the past, and to deal with its consequences, but unfortunately that is not always the case. The proverb, *Man learns from history, that he learns nothing from history*, is unfortunately often true. How else can it be that campaigns against Jewish products are again being promoted in our country, and that there are even supporting church groups who want to deny Israel the right to its land? Today there are also a considerable number of church buildings with a façade adorned with the medieval Jewish sow. If these were different representations, they would have been removed long ago and not left there under the threadbare pretext of preserving art.

[1] *Available from Ebenezer's regional offices.*

In **James 2:24–26** Rahab is called a model for us Christians: *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

What can we learn from this for ourselves today? When we say that God is bringing His people back to the land, but we are not responding with appropriate action, what is the point? The other residents of Jericho were convinced that God was with Israel, but they died because they did not take the right course of action.

Our belief in the restoration of Israel is not mere theory; our generation has the great privilege of being able to actively participate in the Aliyah. As we know from history, such a moment as this can easily be missed. God can bring about the restoration of Israel without our help, and if we sleep when we should be awake to the work of God, He will accomplish it without us. God does not need us but He desires that we co-operate with Him. When will we finally come to the recognition that it is a privilege to bless Israel and not a tiresome duty?

Chapter 6

A Call to the Church in our Nation

Regarding the subject of Israel among Christians today there are three positions. This is only my personal observation, but I encourage the reader to verify for themselves whether or not it is so.

In Germany[1] there is a small group of Christians who identify themselves as friends of Israel. They attend conferences on Israel and visit the land of Israel, they may even support Israel by buying Israeli products, and they often frequent prayer meetings for Israel. In many of their church buildings you are likely to see the flag of Israel, or a Menorah, or a Hanukkah candlestick. This is a visible sign that they see a connection with Israel. Many pastors and Church leaders have decided to pray regularly for Israel in their worship services. From time to time they will invite those who speak on Israel, and they will give to various Israel projects.

Frequently, there are individual believing Christians who are passionate about Israel, and they are often viewed with suspicion by other Christians. There has been (and there still is) extreme behaviour from some of these Israel-lovers, which have provoked rather repellent reactions. Some Christians have tried to convert others to Judaism (I have never experienced this from Jewish people) and have consequently been rejected by their church. I have often asked myself whether or not such behaviour justifies a church in ignoring the subject of Israel? Should the opposite not be true? Have we the right to disregard hundreds of prophecies in the Bible because a few Christians act in an unbiblical way by holding extreme positions in regard to Israel?

If we thought like that, we would have to exclude almost all topics from the everyday life of the Church! Very often a pastor has said to me, 'We have enough problems in our Church!'. If we

[1] *A similar group can be found in the UK*

concern ourselves with Israel, we will have even more problems. I felt sorry for this brother, because he had probably not yet understood that the biblical teaching about Israel would lead to an enormous strengthening of not only the faith of individual Christians, but also that of an entire congregation. Does not the Word of God teach us that the truth sets us free? How can we avoid the truth concerning God's people in our Church life and expect that we will have the full blessings of God?

Other leaders, who only want to answer nicely, but in principle have not yet understood the times in which we live, then make diplomatic statements: 'We know that Israel is an important subject, but there are other priorities for us.' Would it not be more honest to say: I view the subject of Israel, and especially the gathering of the people from the nations, as not relevant for us.

How much suffering the German people in particular would have been spared if they had understood that, even today, Israel is still the apple of God's eye and He will not let those who commit crimes against His people go unpunished. Are we, as pastors and leaders in the Church, prepared to marginalise, or even worse avoid, one of the most important subjects in the Bible?

Zachariah 2:8
For thus says the Lord of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye."

In the past, such simple truths were alien to many Christians, because the Church presumed to take the place of Israel. So-called Replacement Theology gladly took all the blessings in the Old Testament and claimed them for the Church, leaving Israel with all the curses. We should all be aware of what this teaching has led to.

A large number of Christians in our country are not against Israel as such, but, in my experience, simply lack understanding. More than once has it happened that, after a sermon or a lecture, Christians have come up to me and told me that they had not heard any information in their congregation for years about the importance of Israel. In many churches there is no teaching on the feasts of the Lord, nor even any preaching of the basic facts that connect the regathering of Israel and the arrival of the Messiah to this earth.

The priests of Israel had the responsibility to teach the whole counsel of God. Likewise, I believe that pastors, Bible teachers, and elders, should take the following scripture to heart:

Malachi 2:7
For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

Politicians, media-makers, celebrities, and advertising experts alike choose to say things that they believe their listeners want to hear, and which will increase their popularity. A preacher is a messenger of God and as such is responsible to God alone. There have always been times and places where certain biblical truths have been more readily accepted, and times and places where they have been shunned. But that does not give any preacher the right to omit truths.

2 Timothy 4:2–4
Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long- suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Many churches do not want to hear anything about Israel or anything else that could connect them with Israel, because there are now many refugees in Germany[2], and most of them come from a Muslim background and the Church hopes to reach them with the gospel. They assume that if one of these refugees came to a church service and the subject was Israel, it would be an offence to them, as they would be opposed to Jews on account of their bias. Therefore, a talk on the return of the people of Israel to their land would be inappropriate.

However, my experience is just the opposite. I know a significant number of people who have consciously renounced Islam to become

[2] *Although there may be more refugees in Germany, the UK also has a large number of refugees, and some British Churches use the same excuse.*

Christians. Many of them testified to me that they already knew that the Land of Israel belongs to the Jews. Such was a female member of our team. As a radical Muslim she was brought up to hate the Jews. Then she became a Christian and God showed her that her life was under a curse because she cursed Israel every Friday in the mosque (also in the mosques in Germany![3]). But God has freed her from it. Today, she regularly visits the synagogue in order to express her friendship, and she even leads an Israel prayer meeting!

Another situation I have experienced in recent years is that, even in congregations we would generally classify as Israel-friendly, there is often little knowledge of the opportunities that are available to us today to provide practical assistance to the people of Israel with the Aliyah.

It is all the more gratifying to see that in Germany more and more churches are prepared to open their homes for overnight accommodation to Jewish people, as they make their way to the airport; and use their own cars and church vehicles to transport them on their way as they make Aliyah. Some even donate a one-off gift or make regular donations to meet their costs when they make Aliyah.

I have never met a church that regrets their commitment to helping Jewish people. Rather, they can testify that their members have grown spiritually and fellowship life has been made visible in many areas of the church. I pray to God that the day will come when we will have seminars and conferences and prayer meetings for the Aliyah and are not able to cope with the numbers of believers. This is not just another Christian organisation, but, as Jeremiah describes it, it is an historical event that far surpasses the Exodus from Egypt:

Jeremiah 16:14–16

"Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that it shall no more be said, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the Lord, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters,

[3] *The situation is similar in the UK*

and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

What kind of Church do we want to see emerging in our nation?

- Type 1: A Church that blesses Israel by helping Jewish people make Aliyah.
- Type 2: A Church that is not against Israel, but has a passive neutral position, out of ignorance or indifference.
- Type 3: A Church that gives room to anti-Zionist ideas, for example by supporting the BDS movement[4].

The above question should not even arise in the first place, and yet today we have to note with regret that unfortunately we know congregations of Type 2 and 3. Each one of us is capable of thinking for ourselves about the importance of the Aliyah and how we can be involved in it.

[4] *The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement is a global campaign attempting to increase economic and political pressure on Israel to comply with the stated goals of the movement. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boycott,_Divestment_and_Sanctions.*

Chapter 7

Ebenezer Operation Exodus – Three focal points of our organisation

We are often asked what kind of a organisation is Ebenezer Operation Exodus? The short answer is: a Christian organisation that supports Jewish people in their return to their homeland. When, during the Gulf War in January 1991, about 120 people gathered to pray together in Jerusalem, we were certain that this war would end in Israel's favour! How did we have this certainty? We knew the Word of God and His promises for Israel that are yet to be fulfilled, particularly, His Word concerning the regathering of Israel from all the nations of the world, which is presently only partially fulfilled. Not only that, but we proclaimed various Bible verses that speak of God's protection for Israel in times of danger, for example, **Psalm 124:4**: *Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

It was not just prayer for the protection of Israel, but it was also the Word concerning the regathering of the Jewish people that motivated us. We soon found out that there seemed to be many obstacles to the return of the Jews, including financial challenges, logistical difficulties, and mindsets, as well as teaching and philosophy that was intended to prevent the Jews from returning home. Also, there were other issues such as anxiety, or mostly fear of change. So, today we pray that God would remove these hindrances, but that He would also show us which obstacles we can remove ourselves.

Isaiah 62:10
Go through, Go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway! Take out the stones, Lift up a banner for the peoples!

The first focus in our organisation is **Prayer**. When we pray it preserves us from arrogance. We do not receive any honour, but we learn that God is at work, even if He often uses people to fulfil His will. Today, in our Ebenezer prayer meetings we pray in the main for the three stages of the Aliyah:

1. **Searching for Jewish people who live in the Diaspora**: then we pray for the workers of the Jewish and Christian organisations, who are dedicated to the Aliyah. From certain regions it is very often a long process before the actual Aliyah is accomplished.

2. **The journey home itself**: for many years we brought the Jewish people home as ship passengers from Odessa to Haifa. Almost 50,000 olim were brought home to Israel this way. Today, most of the olim travel by aeroplane, but it is possible that one day again ships will be used. That this happens only with enormous finances, personnel and logistics, will be clear to every reader. Sometimes, Jewish people come from war-torn areas and have to be brought out secretly.

3. **Establishment in the Land**: following the excitement of their homecoming, come certain challenges. It is not easy for some of the olim to integrate into Israeli Society. One of the early challenges is that of learning a new language. Then there is the challenge of adjusting to a new climate in a country that is threatened by terrorism in and around Israel. As a consequence, some are discouraged and decide to leave Israel. In this case we frequently pray according to the following: **Amos 9:14–15**, *"I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.*

Moving on we come to the second focus, **financial giving**. I still remember an offering that was made by the delegates at the 1991 prayer conference. Altogether it amounted to $30,000, which was

used to buy tickets for the flight of Russian Jews out of Hungary. We give willingly from what God has given to us and we use it to support the Aliyah. In the last few months we have experienced believers who have donated their cars so that Ebenezer can transport the olim to the airport. And then there's the sister who gave her free time to become Ebenezer's treasurer, or the brother who helps by translating for us, and others who help by manning the bookstall, or managing registration for conferences. The regular financial sacrifice of the low-income pensioner counts just as much as a large sum from a company profit or an inheritance. God always sees our heart and we can be certain that each donation given with the right attitude will bring eternal fruit.

The third focus is **GO**. One brings the olim to the airport in his car, or helps by loading containers; others help by providing accommodation for the days prior to their departure. Some have even taken their holiday for a few weeks in Russia, Ukraine, or Moldova to search for Jewish people in order to speak to them about the Aliyah. For many years in Germany there have been increased opportunities for contact and friendship with Jewish people: some regularly visit the local synagogue to express solidarity; whilst others seek contact with their Jewish neighbours.

As always, what counts is the right motive. We come to serve and not to force our beliefs on someone or to determine what they should do. It is vital that we treat with respect the people who grant us the privilege of visiting or assisting them.

Many Ebenezer friends have accompanied us on our visits to Israel. During these trips we visit the olim and assure them that we will not forget them nor forsake them. We have an office in Jerusalem and our workers there care for the new immigrants and are a real blessing to them. In our Haifa house for olim we provide a first place to stay in the land. The fact that there is someone there to help in times of emergency is a comfort to the olim.

Looking to the future it is clear that we will need enormous finances, and more workers, to care for the increasing numbers of Jewish people who will be making Aliyah. This will only be possible through faithful believers who are ready to adopt the three focuses.

The following Psalm is frequently both an encouragement to me and a prayer. The return to Zion occurs with joy and rejoicing. The joy in the faces of the olim when they arrive in Israel is something to witness, and to be there with them is perhaps one of the greatest joys here on earth: thousands of years of exile in the nations will eventually have ended!

Psalm 126

A Song of Ascents. When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.

Comments from Jewish Friends

This chapter is written by Jewish friends of mine involved in Aliyah. I have learnt a lot from them, especially that every effort we make to help the Jewish people return to their homeland is worth it.

Rabbi Ari Abramovich, Jerusalem:

When I first came to Jerusalem, it was supposed to be just for a number of months. Yet after just a few weeks I realised that Israel would be my home for the rest of my life.

My pull towards Jerusalem was magnetic and I realised that despite my parents' objections I simply would not be able to live a truly joyful and fulfilling life anywhere else.

Everybody has their "lightening bolt" moment. Mine was when I was looking at a can of Coca Cola and I couldn't take my eyes off it and I didn't know why. Then it struck me, for my entire life Hebrew was an old dead language like Latin. Now G-d has breathed life into the Hebrew language and it was written on a can of Coca Cola. At that moment I heard the children playing in the playground speaking the same words as Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah the prophets. The words of Zephaniah the Prophet were coming to life before my very eyes as an old dead language was being revived for the first time in Jewish history.

There is no greater kindness that can be done for a Jew than helping to bring them back home. A Jew in exile is like a fish flopping around on the riverbank and gasping for air. At this point the fish's 30 second memory span has expired and it thinks that this is what it is to be a fish, gasping for air and slowly dying. Over our long and painful 2,000 year exile, so many Jews have forgotten that we belong in the water, not on the riverbank. Supporting Aliyah is not only an act of love and kindness for the nation of Israel, but for the G-d of Israel as well.

The Prophet Ezekiel says in Chapter 36 *"Not for your sake, Israel, do I bring you back to the land of Israel, but because of the desecration of My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations that I took pity on (do I bring you back to Israel)".*

Ezekiel 36:20–22
And when they came to the nations, to which they came, they profaned my holy name, when men said of them, These are the people of the Lord, and they are gone out from his land! But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations, to which they came. Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: I do not do this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations, to which you came.

Just as the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people is a desecration of G-d's name, the ingathering of the exile is a sanctification of His name.

G-d is bringing His people home. Those righteous among the nations who give of themselves with sacrifice and support are turning to G-d just as Abraham did and they are saying "Hineni – Here I am G-d, use me!"

Every Jew that returns home is one more brick in the Temple, and all those that support their return are actively participating in the greatest unfolding redemption the world has ever seen.

Iris Goldman, Jerusalem:
Mercy for Jacob

Isaiah 14:1–2
For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. Then people will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the Lord; they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors.

It is written in the Bible that God's promises are Yes and Amen. This encompasses every promise of the Lord from Genesis through Revelation, including every promise concerning the people and Land of Israel.

As a Jewish believer whom God has gathered from the Diaspora and settled in my own Land, I am dismayed and saddened by reports of Christians who ostensibly know the Bible yet call upon people and institutions to distance or even to separate themselves from Israel. Where is the "clinging to the house of Jacob"? Where is the understanding of the Lord's heart of mercy toward His people, of His promises to bring them home to the Land, which He promised them eternally and whose borders He Himself so clearly defined? Do they not remember the tears of Yeshua over Jerusalem and His saying that we need to be here to bless Him upon His return (Matthew 23:39)?

Nevertheless, praise and thanks to God for Christians and Christian ministries such as Ebenezer Operation Exodus with understanding of the Lord's heart. Such Christians and ministries are courageously and faithfully standing with Him, upon His Word, and with the people and Land of Israel. They are assisting Jewish people to return to their homeland, and I myself am privileged to work in Ebenezer's Jerusalem Office to help my brethren get settled here. All of these efforts are preparation for the day when "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26) and our fullness will bring riches to the Gentiles (Romans 11:12). May the hearts of many more Christians be opened up in these days so that this glorious task may be accomplished more speedily – all to the glory of God!

Joram Dan Oppenheimer, Berlin:

Israel is a special land for many reasons. Since the State was founded we are in constant distress. The society in Israel is so multi-ethnic, like almost nowhere else on the face of the earth. Its development is fast and progressive and we can be proud of our academic and scientific successes worldwide. If we ask ourselves how this came to pass, what mostly contributed to this success, we can see one particular reason – aliyah, the immigration, which formed our society from the first days of Zionism until today.

In the past, millions of olim came in different waves from Russia, the Soviet Union, from Poland, Germany, Yemen, the US, from France and Ethiopia. They always enriched our land. They brought new ideas, new knowledge, new cultures, and new thinking. It is not an easy thing for a land to continuously receive new groups of people and to integrate them. But we know that they integrate very fast.

I would like to tell you the story of my father, Heinz Oppenheimer from Lebach near Saarbrücken. He had many bad experiences in Germany in 1935. His fellow students at University molested him and beat him up. So he took maybe the most important decision of his life: He went on a ship from Poland to Palestine. So, like thousands of other young people of that time, after some weeks or even months, he arrived in Haifa to have a new start. This decision saved his life – the rest of his family did not survive in Germany.

Serge Tscherniak, Berlin:

I got to know Johannes Barthel in 2011 in Berlin, during my work as Aliyah Delegate in the Jewish Agency. Johannes is a faithful friend of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. As a real Christian believer, he respects the Old Testament, which is the Holy Scripture for the Jewish people. In his work, Johannes supports the Jews who want to make Aliyah (immigration to Israel). This starts with consulting and continues until the payment of group Aliyah flights from Germany. For me it is an honour to know Johannes, his wife Silke, their children and to have friends like them.

Jacob (Yankele) Snir, Jerusalem:
In over 16 years of engagement for Keren Hayesod, I have met olim from all over Europe: Spain, France, Belarus, Ukraine etc. With a sparkle in their eyes and great excitement they used to tell me about their dreams of a future life in the Promised Land.

A very special memory I carry is from visits to Ethiopia, where I visited the northern city of Gondar. Since 1984 we have been engaged in assisting the immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. A lost tribe (perhaps the tribe of Dan) has lived there in total seclusion for many generations. By the end of the 19th century, the western world "discovered" them. They carried on the commandments of the Torah despite living in gruelling times and feeling abandoned.

About ten years ago, I visited Ethiopia around early April. In the compound where thousands of Ethiopian Jews were gathering they were baking "Matzot" for Pesach (Passover), in line with the long-held Jewish tradition that started when the Jews were exiting Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The next day we boarded the flight to Tel Aviv together with 200 new immigrants. In their white robes they all resembled "Bnei Israel" who came out of Egypt. The flight route took us along the Red Sea. I could not but think of this Exodus on the wings of "El-Al" as the natural continuation of the biblical exodus. Instead of getting to the Promised Land in 40 years, as the Bible tells us, we made it in 4 hours!

In 1880 there were 27,000 Jews living in Eretz Israel. The then barren land now, in 2016, accommodates over 6 million Jews! Aliyah has made this miracle possible! God's promise to Abraham, the very first oleh, "and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great." (Genesis 12), is being fulfilled before our very own eyes.

Hanna Ben Haim, Jerusalem:
I recall clearly my Aliyah more than 30 years ago; the overwhelming feeling of being in a new land, culture and language. There were many discouraging days. When I think back, I imagine how much better it would have been if someone had been there to explain things and encourage us and get us over the many challenges and trials ahead. All I can say is that when I see how Ebenezer comes alongside and helps new immigrants get to this land, and encourages them, I am so thankful. What a gift to this nation to have supporters and donors who go the extra miles to make Aliyah a success.

I am now a tour guide and have had the privilege of guiding many Ebenezer Operation Exodus groups. They are not your average Christians. They know the Bible, believe it and are operating on it. We don't just visit the stones and the ancient sites of Israel; they always include visits to olim, speaking to officials and praying for the return of the Jewish people to the whole land of Israel. It is such a joy to be with these "lovers of Zion". They value not just the stories of the Bible but what God is accomplishing in our day, the fulfillment of the prophecies of old. I often feel humbled to meet these Christians who sometimes have a clearer sight of all that is happening today than those who it is happening to!

May Israelis and Jews worldwide recognise who are our friends and partners in the rebuilding of this land. May we link together arm in arm for the days ahead when more of Israel will see and know the great God of our forefathers.

From a Veteran Immigrant.

Appendix – Book recommendations and contact details

Ebenezer Operation Exodus has representatives in over 50 nations. You are welcome to invite our staff to visit your church, prayer group or home group meeting, to speak about Aliyah.

We also regularly organise trips to Israel. If you wish we can organise a programme fitted to your group's needs. Feel free to contact us and to find out how we can serve you best.

If you wish to be active in helping the work of Aliyah, please speak with us.

We recommend the following publications which you can get in our offices:

Operation Exodus – Gustav Scheller
Gustav Scheller writes about the beginning and expansion of the organisation.

When the Cross Became a Sword – Merrill Bolender
Booklet about the origin and consequences of replacement theology.

Biblical Prophecy – The return of the Jewish people to Israel
About 100 biblical references about the regathering of Israel.

Four times a year we send out our free Ebenezer bulletin; a compilation of Aliyah reports from different nations, along with biblical teaching and testimonies of olim. Our intercessors regularly receive a prayer letter and we hold Ebenezer prayer meetings at different places. Please contact us if you want to receive regular information.

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'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock'
Jeremiah 31:10.

In this booklet Johannes Barthel, a regional coordinator for Ebenezer Operation Exodus, brings clear evidence from the Bible that the return of the Jewish people to Israel, referred to as the Aliyah, is not only prophesied, but is one of the signs of the present age that is happening before our very eyes.

Briefly and concisely, he explains why God's people Israel are returning to their land. The Jewish return is one of the greatest miracles of world history.

The Bible makes many concrete predictions about the gathering of Israel in its land. As gentile believers in Jesus we are invited by God in His Word to partner with Him in assisting with the Aliyah as He brings the Jews of the diaspora home.

Ken Hepworth

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OPERATION EXODUS

A Christian organisation helping the Jewish people return to Israel

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